

# The Bellcord

Journal of the Melbourne Tram Museum



*The newly built W6 1000 in Plenty Rd outside the newly opened Preston Depot on 26 June, 1955 – the first day of services on the Bourke St to East Preston route. Note the Marshalite ‘clock-face’ traffic signals and two M&MTB tower wagons at the Bell St intersection.*  
Photo: Noel Reed, courtesy TDU archives

## AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at the museum on Saturday 23 September at 9.30am, before the scheduled open day. Details have been mailed to members.

## Open House Melbourne

With over two hundred venues open to visitors around Melbourne over the weekend of 29-30 July, a record 1671 people visited the museum. Previous totals have been 1325, 1652, 1385 and 1532 (2013 to 2016) with Sundays being the more popular day. You can tell how many children are in by the ringing of the gongs.

Thanks to all the volunteers, including those from Open House Melbourne, who participated over the weekend. The shop was very busy on both days with proceeds going toward various museum projects.

## NBN at the Museum

The current phone lines will be disconnected in December so alterations are being made to the fire alarms and the shop's EFTPOS terminal and phone. From now on, please use this new number on open days: 03 9819 6447.

## Upcoming Website Articles

Keep an eye on the museum's website over the next couple of months. New articles on Sunday morning tram services, all-night trams, route numbers and electrolysis will be added soon.

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VIP Visitor

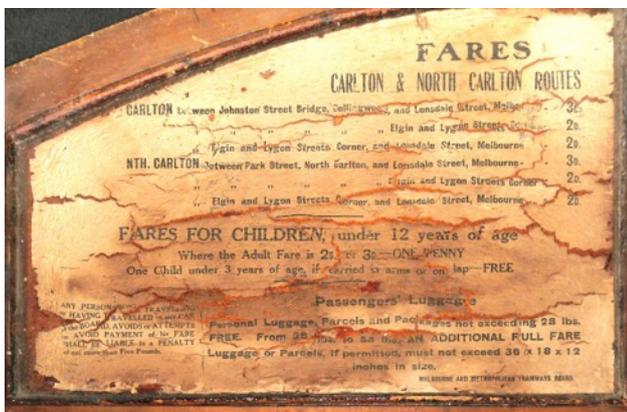


Well known tramway historian, Keith Kings, visited the museum in mid-August and is pictured here with Geoff Brown, Kevin Taig and Rod Atkins. It was great to catch up. In recent years Keith has donated most of his extensive collection to the State Library Victoria, the National Film and Sound Archive and our museum. Keith will turn 89 in November.

Our Collection

Recently the museum has received a number of items. From the estate of the late Ron Wilson of Boronia were six albums of photographs, some Melbourne tramway related pamphlets and timetables. Another donor contributed some Victorian Railways papers about cable tram level crossings.

Then from museum member Craig Wright, a fare panel that was fitted to the inside of a cable car, detailing the fares payable on the Carlton and North Carlton routes (such as the trams depicted in the photo on page 3). This is the third fare panel we have in the collection. Thanks to all donors.



If you would like to learn more about our collection or assist in this area, I would be very happy to chat.

Warren Doubleday, Collection Manager

New Items at the Museum Shop

Looking for gifts for family and friends overseas? We have loads of colourful tram handkerchiefs and tea towels – perfect for posting or slipping into suitcases. Or if a white Christmas is in your travel plans, wrap up warm with our extra fine merino tram scarves.



Our new range of model trams from German brands Siku and Dickie is proving to be a big hit with junior visitors. With prices from \$7.50 to \$39.00 there is something suitable for all budgets.

And for enthusiasts, Cooe diecast models are back in stock. Available as SW6 no 965 in M&MTB green livery, or SW6 no 888 in City Circle livery, the models are \$109.95 each.

For further details, visit the Museum Shop on any open day, view our website or email [shop@trammuseum.org.au](mailto:shop@trammuseum.org.au).

Upcoming Open Days - 2017
9 September 23 September 14 October
28 October 11 November 25 November
9 December
The Melbourne Tram Museum is open on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month (except 4th Saturday of December). Normal opening hours are 11am-5pm.
Museum: 8 Wallen Road Hawthorn Victoria 3122
Postal Address: PO Box 6172 Hawthorn West Victoria 3122
E-mail: info@trammuseum.org.au
Website: http://www.trammuseum.org.au
New Phone (open days only): (03) 9819 6447.
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Editor: Geoff Brown

## FROM STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA COLLECTION



*Swanston St looking south from Lonsdale St (1921-22) Photo: State Library Victoria*

*ABOUT THIS PHOTO: A popular UK-built AEC “Y” lorry used to drop gravel is towing a heavily loaded cable tram set into Lonsdale St on its journey from Brighton Rd to Rathdowne St, North Carlton. It appears that the grip cannot pick up the Lonsdale St cable – a common difficulty at this location. However, the number of passengers on board suggests the tram is expected to pick up the cable soon and continue its journey. The tram behind will also turn right on its journey to Johnston St Bridge (earlier designated Carlton).*

*Two uniformed tramwaymen have their backs to the camera – possibly an inspector in the left foreground and a signalman with point bar at the front left of the dummy. The building being reconstructed in the background is the new Tattersalls Club that opened in 1922 replacing an older building burnt down in April 1921. This dates the photo as late 1921 to early 1922. Today this building is Curtin House.*

*Rod Atkins*

## VICTORIA'S FIRST MUNICIPAL TRAMWAYS TRUST

*The Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust is admired by many. Museum guide Frank McCulloch explains some of the reasons he is one such admirer.*

The development of the suburbs of Prahran and Malvern in the early twentieth century saw an increasing demand for public transport not addressed by either the existing networks of the Victorian Railways or the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company (MTOC).

Residents were agitating for the development of an electric tramway to meet this local demand. The North Melbourne Electric Tramways and Lighting Co Ltd had constructed lines from Flemington Bridge to Saltwater River and to North Essendon. The

government-owned Victorian Railways had opened an electric tram route between St Kilda and Brighton Beach Railway Stations. Both began operations in 1906 and Prahran and Malvern were feeling left out.

### Local government ownership

After more than a decade of unsuccessful proposals, it was clear that the state government would not build the tramway and that ratepayers objected to a private company making profits from its streets. Malvern Shire Council (as it was then known) took a different approach. A Malvern councillor and solicitor, Alexander Cameron, argued for the municipality to own and to operate its own tramway – as in Fremantle, Adelaide and many UK cities.

The essence of the Municipal Tramways Trust was that it was owned by the participating municipalities and managed at arm's length by representatives appointed by each council. The councils and ratepayers would set broad policies, provide the financial security and receive the profits but would not interfere in management and operational decisions. The Malvern Council master-minded this movement in Melbourne and gained the interest of neighbouring municipalities in its progressive ideas.

Councillor Alexander Cameron was a good negotiator which proved pivotal in dealing with Malvern and neighbouring councils and with the state government. He used his legal knowledge and business ability to pave the way for the formation of the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust (PMTT) in 1907 and was elected chairman by both councils in March 1908.

### Early challenges

These early years brought numerous challenges for Cameron, the Trust and its supporters. Locally the Prahran and Malvern Councils disagreed on details of tramway routes and Prahran complained that Malvern was going it alone with planning and negotiations. Groups of ratepayers were vocal in their concern that their councils were taking them into debt by operating a large tramway enterprise.

Challenges of a different nature came from the state government, particularly from the Premier, Thomas Bent. A major challenge was the number of level crossings along the Caulfield Railway line – road crossings that could eventually have a tramway crossing. Before any government consideration would be given to authorising a tramway, Bent demanded that the councils pay £13,000 to lower the railway tracks between Toorak and Malvern. This hostility towards the councils was unprecedented and was the reverse of Bent's actions when constructing the St Kilda to Brighton Beach Electric Street Railway.

In November 1908, a joint deputation met with the Premier and asked to have the Tramways Bill drawn up by the Parliamentary Draftsman. The Premier refused. When the draft was prepared by council solicitors and brought before the Legislative Assembly, he would not allow it to pass unless a clause was inserted, giving the Government the power to purchase the tramways. The councils had either to accept or see their venture dashed. The councils acceded with Cameron reporting that the state government had shackled their enterprise.



High St, Armadale (c1915) – PMTT's first route.

Photo: State Library Victoria

The Trust's fare revenue was also restricted. The Trust was not permitted to sell through-tickets for tram or train at reduced rates, nor issue concessional workmen's tickets. Nor was it to enter into any arrangement for transfers to a train or to an omnibus of the cable-tram company (MTOC). Yet the Trust had to concede concessions in fares to the MTOC.

Three months after the order for construction of the tramway was lodged, the Trust paid the £13,000 for the railway upgrade but the Premier did not sign the order for a further twelve months. Over the coming years the railway cutting was excavated between Hawksburn and Malvern and the level crossings became road bridges. The state government had failed to clip the financial wings of the councils.

### Future benchmarks

As the Trust expanded to seven municipalities, Chairman Cameron became a recognised authority on passenger transport and a tireless advocate of electric trams as transport for developing suburbs. The Trust's systems and management became benchmarks for tramways trusts in other suburbs and greatly influenced the future Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board which Cameron led from 1919 until 1935.

For a comprehensive history, read Ian Brady's book, *Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust (2011)*, available at the museum shop. *Frank McCulloch*

### QUICK QUIZ

Do you know the answers to these questions? (Museum guide Kevin Stanes will provide them in the next edition.)

- What two trams run along the same road but never see each other until they cross at a major city intersection?
- What tram runs along Flinders Lane?

**RISKY BUSINESS:  
South Melbourne's First Electric Tramway**

An early project of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) was to build an electric tramway along Sturt St, South Melbourne through Middle Park to the junction of The Esplanade and Fitzroy St, St Kilda. Construction commenced in 1925 and tram services began in October.

The promotional poster opposite was commissioned a few years later to advertise this line and the new St Kilda Rd line as convenient transport to the beaches.

While the M&MTB built the new tramway, it had been planned much earlier by the City of South Melbourne – and approved for construction by 1914. So why wasn't it built at that time?

Divided opinion over financial risk led to a long-term stalemate. This is the story.

**Overcrowding**

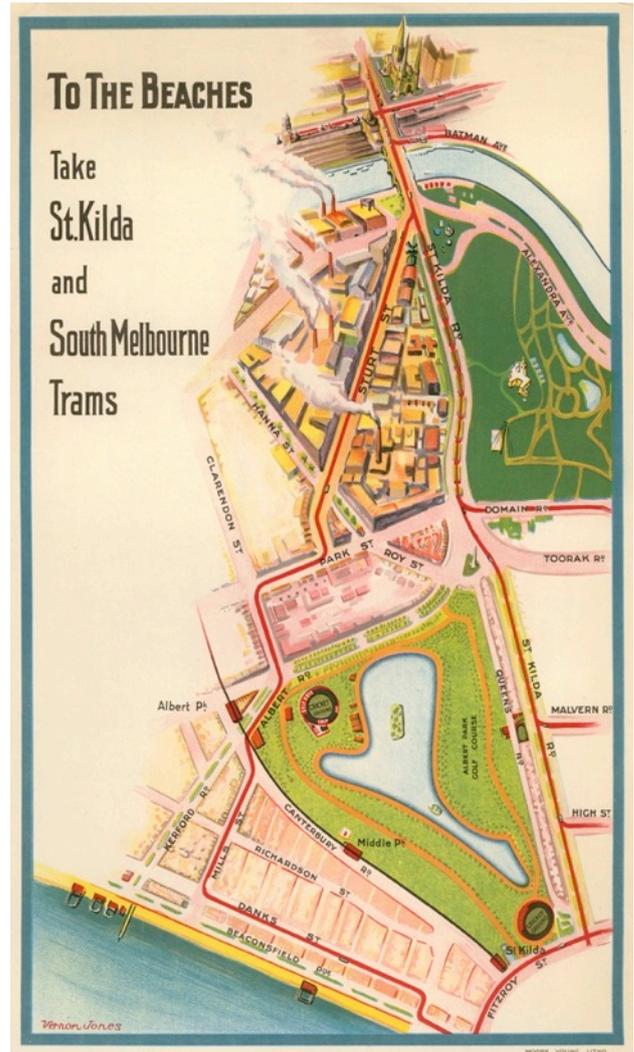
By 1891 the City of South Melbourne was home to 41,000 people and for many years was Melbourne's second most populous municipality after the City of Melbourne. It stretched from the Yarra River docks and nearby industry to southern residential areas.

Apart from horse omnibuses, mass public transport was provided by the Melbourne to St Kilda Railway (from 1857) and the city to South Melbourne cable tram (from 1890). By the late 1890s calls for more services were common in newspapers. Residents also petitioned the city council to address the overcrowding experienced by peak-hour travellers and summer beachgoers.

Council negotiations with the Victorian Railways and the Melbourne Tram and Omnibus Company brought little improvement. Soon vocal residents and councillors talked of building their own electric tramway, encouraged by similar talk in other municipalities.

*A South Melbourne cable tram in Bridport St with the St Kilda Railway level crossing in the distance. (c1920) This tramway was a source of frequent overcrowding complaints.*

*Photo: State Library Victoria*



*Poster promoting new electric tram routes. Note that it does not show the nearby South Melbourne cable tramway, the new Hanna St Depot with connecting track nor the Mills St spur to Beaconsfield Pde. Artist: Vernon Jones (c1930), courtesy State Library Victoria*



**Proposed routes**

Because the residential areas of Middle Park and the industrial area of the north-east were not well served by the railway or the cable tram, Danks St and Sturt St became the council's preferred direction for a proposed new tramway. It avoided the streets with established cable tramways but would still allow passengers to transfer between systems.

Beaconsfield Pde had been ruled out because of recent expensive beautification works along the foreshore and the supposed danger to young beachgoers. The Danks St route avoided this and provided a wider passenger catchment. The new tramway would pass under the St Kilda Railway at the Kerford Rd Bridge that would require a widening of the underpass and a slight raising of the bridge.

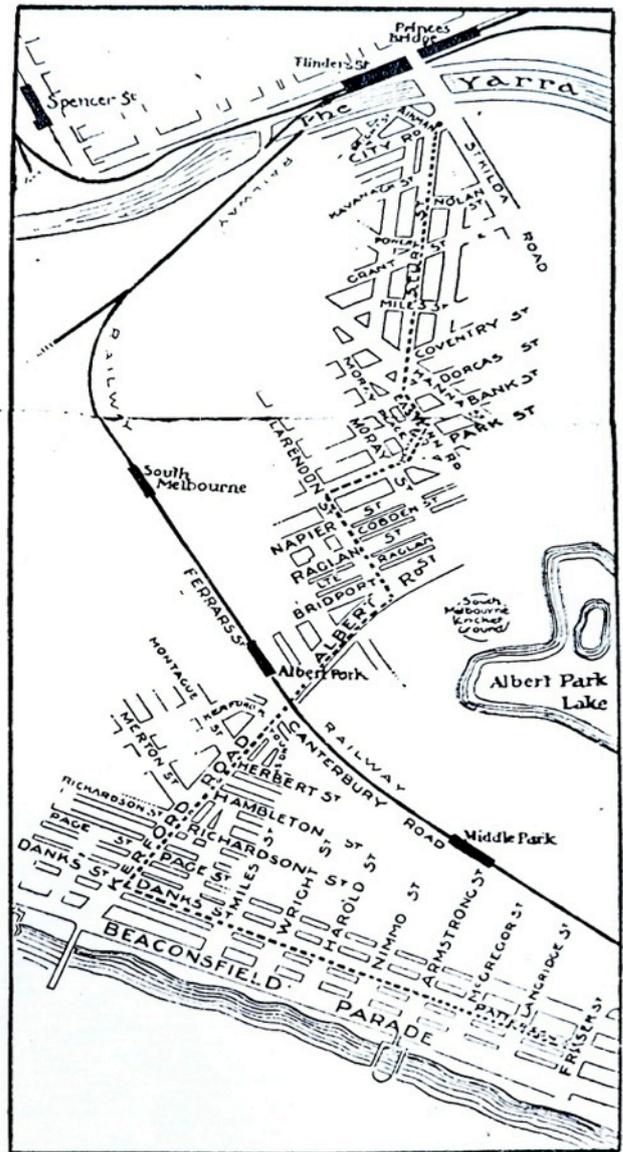
Numerous connections with other municipalities were discussed to benefit travellers and to generate revenue. Serious consideration was given to a southern extension into St Kilda, via Beaconsfield Pde and Acland St to connect with the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust (PMTT) line in Carlisle St.

Less popular proposals were for a line along Albert Rd and Queens Rd to Commercial Rd, Prahran or around the southern edge of the lake to High St, Prahran. There were also proposals to connect with the Hawthorn Tramways Trust line in Batman Ave or even to build a line through the Port Melbourne docks to Williamstown. Some of these proposals were later included in the M&MTB's 1923 General Scheme.

**Construction approved**

In 1912 Cr W Strangward of the City of South Melbourne submitted a proposal to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways to build its preferred route (illustrated opposite). Cr Strangward was a long-term councillor, an accountant and a member of several tramway authorities, including secretary of the PMTT (and later secretary of the M&MTB). In its report the committee supported this proposal and noted the council's hope that an extension into another municipality may be possible in the future.

In 1913 the City of South Melbourne commissioned McCarty, Underwood & Co Electrical Engineers to examine the engineering and financial details. They too supported the same route and costed it just under £64,000, including a car depot in Sturt St and ten



*The proposed route submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways by Cr Strangward. Note the use of Kerford Rd and the terminus at Fraser St, the city's southern boundary. (The Emerald Hill Record, 13 July, 1912)*

drop-end single truck cars similar to those of the PMTT.

In 1914 the South Melbourne Tramways Act and the Governor in Council authorised the borrowing of £64,000 and the tramway's construction. The state government was authorising other municipal tramways at the same time, perhaps as a strategy to bring about a Melbourne-wide municipal tramway trust as recommended by the 1910-11 Royal Commission.

But from this point there was no further progress in South Melbourne. It did not establish a tramways trust nor proceed with construction.



South Melbourne City Council (1904). Nine of these councillors were still in office in 1914 when the tramway was authorised. These included Cr Strangward and Cr McArthur (standing fourth & second from right) and Cr Craine and Cr Baragwanath (seated far left and centre, mayor)  
Photo: Port Phillip City Collection

**Councillors divided**

Many councillors were long serving and the tramway issue had been a topic of debate for years. When authority to build it was handed to the council, the voices of dissent grew louder. Two new reports supported those concerned about the financial risk.

In July 1914 the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways recommended against the proposed extension into St Kilda via Acland St to Carlisle St – which would have increased passengers and revenue for South Melbourne, but duplicate existing lines and not benefit St Kilda. It also claimed that even a shorter extension to Fitzroy St would bring little benefit to St Kilda. The St Kilda Council lost all interest.

In 1915 the PMTT completed a report that reviewed the financial viability of seven proposed electric tramways. On South Melbourne it noted that viability depended on connection to other lines. It also estimated the increased costs that South Melbourne Council would need to fund, noting that the war, shortage of materials and the upcoming electrification of the railways could adversely affect tramways.

Some councillors remained in favour, persuaded by the daily travel difficulties of residents. As noted above, Cr West Strangward (1870-1929) was one who held these views. With him was Cr Donald McArthur JP (1855-1924), a long-term councillor, two-time mayor and a long-term chairman of their Tramways Committee. He consistently argued for a municipal tramway as a community amenity.

Other councillors were cautious of taking on debt and proposed waiting for the formation of a Melbourne-wide tramway authority to assume responsibility. A prominent member on this side was Cr John Baragwanath JP (1856-1943). He was a long-term councillor, a four-time mayor and also a member of the Tramway Committee. He quoted the losses suffered by the Footscray Tramways Trust and the Caulfield Council and was critical of the state government shifting costs onto municipalities. With him was Cr Thomas Craine JP (1863-1940), a three-time mayor and councillor for 41 years, who supported Baragwanath’s concerns about debt.

Yet considerable support for the tramway continued and in 1917 the council successfully applied for a three year extension to its loan authorisation. But it was never taken up.



*BELOW: Looking north along Sturt St at the same intersection of City Rd and St Kilda Rd (May 1925, six months earlier). M&MTB contractors are constructing the track to be used by the tram shown opposite.*

*Photo: State Library Victoria*

*ABOVE: The intersection of St Kilda Rd, City Rd and Sturt St with the new YMCA building in the background (late 1925). Q class 144 waits at the original northern terminus before turning left into Sturt St bound for St Kilda Beach. The connecting track to Prince's Bridge is under construction for electric services to begin on 4 January 1926.*

*Photo: State Library Victoria*



### M&MTB takes over

This stalemate was only broken when the M&MTB took control of tramway matters. The proposed South Melbourne tramway and several others were written into Schedule Six of the *Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act (1919)* for possible future construction. In South Melbourne's case, prior authorisation meant construction could proceed without delay.

The original route was altered to run along Mills St instead of Kerford Rd to increase the distance from the Victoria Ave cable tramway and so broaden the passenger catchment. It was also extended to Fitzroy St and The Esplanade for connection with the soon to be converted St Kilda Beach cable tramway.

In 1925 South Melbourne finally gained its first electric tramway for a small cost of £7,000 towards the alterations of the Kerford Rd Bridge. The council had avoided financial risk – but the travelling public had paid a price, struggling with overcrowded public transport for a further ten years.

The tramway has undergone several route alterations since (summarised opposite), and still serves the suburb today.

*Geoff Brown*

*Thanks to the Emerald Hill Library and Heritage Centre staff and Mal Rowe for their assistance.*

### TIMELINE of early route alterations

**1925-26:** Line constructed and services extended to East & West Preston via Swanston St, Lygon St, Brunswick Rd, Holden St and St Georges Rd.

**1930:** Services rerouted to East Coburg when Collins St and Brunswick St electrified.

**1937:** South Melbourne cable tramway electrified and rerouted along Spencer St and Collins St to East & West Preston. (No alteration to the St Kilda Beach line at this time.)

**1953:** Alteration to routes travelling through Park St and Clarendon St intersection. The St Kilda Beach route redirected via Clarendon St and Collins St to East Preston (truncated to Northcote in 1955) and West Preston; the South Melbourne Beach line rerouted via Swanston St to East Coburg.

**1959:** Beaconsfield Pde terminus abandoned due to traffic congestion and a new terminus built in Park St, St Kilda at Fitzroy St without connecting track. (Track connection made in 1995.)